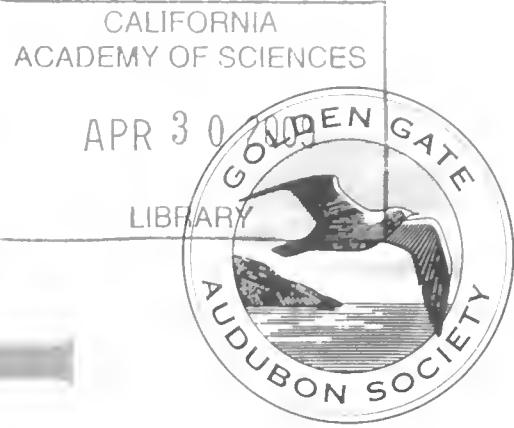


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VOL. 94 NO. 4 MAY 2009

E GULL

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY



Anthony DeCicco

Eco-Oakland interns (left to right) Chan Saelee, Steven Saefong, Koy Saefong, and Oscar Murillo wowed attendees at the 2009 Audubon California Assembly with their presentation about marine debris and its impacts on the Laysan Albatross and other species.

Eco-Oakland Interns Address Audubon Assembly

With assistance from the Miles T. McKey Memorial Fund, four of GGA's Eco-Oakland interns, all from Oakland High, received scholarships to attend the 2009 Audubon California Assembly in Asilomar in March. Representing Golden Gate Audubon, our interns were invited by Wendy Dalia of Richardson Bay Audubon to join youth from around the state to discuss the future of conservation, the theme of this year's assembly.

With past experience teaching bay and marine stewardship, the interns gave a presentation on reversing the effects of marine debris on Pacific wildlife, aiming not only to foster awareness about the accumulation of plastic in the Pacific gyres, but also to empower their audience with solutions for reducing plastic waste. Their presentation was inspired by the work of the Long Beach-based Algalita Marine Research Foundation, which has conducted science-based studies to estimate the severity of plastic in the Pacific. As the interns explained to their audience, plastic never decomposes, but photodegrades into its original constituents—petrochemicals and toxic additives.

As the interns told the audience, in the vast expanse between California and Hawaii, the North Pacific Gyre or "Eastern Pacific Garbage Patch" is roughly twice

ECO-OAKLAND INTERNS continued on page 12

Meet GGA's New Executive Director

Mark Welther, who began serving as Executive Director of Golden Gate Audubon on April 20, 2009, brings outstanding experience and multiple skills to his new job.

For the past two-and-a-half years, Mark served as founding Executive Director of an emerging non-profit organization, Spaulding Wooden Boat Center in Sausalito. With a new board of directors, one part-time staff member, and 50 volunteers, he created a maritime museum and educational center from a historic boat yard. In the process, he launched new youth education programs and introduced Marin City and County youth to the art and craft of woodworking and sailing, developed a youth and senior public sailing program staffed with volunteers, worked with the board of directors to raise funds, and increased the organization's visibility through national and local media coverage and public speaking.

Prior to that position, Mark worked for nine years managing membership and major donor fundraising programs for the California League of Conservation Voters (CLCV), one of the state's largest and oldest environmental organizations. As Membership Director of CLCV, he reversed a six-year membership decline and added more than 1,000 new members per year, as well as helped raise substantial funds through major donors and members, including \$2.5 million in 2006.

MEET GGA'S NEW E.D. continued on page 2



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The Golden Gate Audubon Society was founded January 25, 1917, and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948. Golden Gate Audubon Supporting Membership is \$25 per year. Renewals should be sent to the Golden Gate Audubon office. The board of directors meets six times per year (schedule can be obtained from the main office).

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Nature Store hours: Monday – Friday, 9 – 12, 1 – 5

Design and layout e g communications

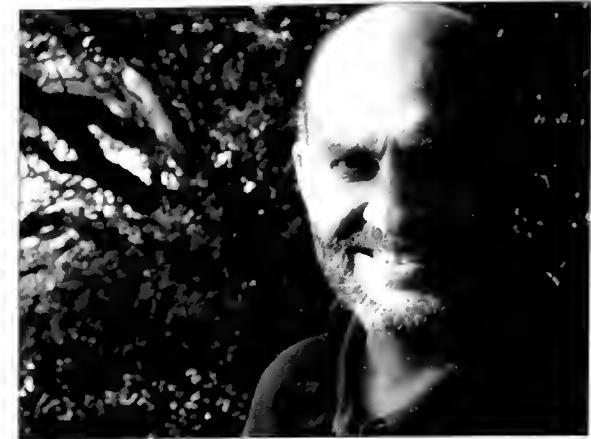
MEET GGA'S NEW E.D. from cover

Susan Smartt, who was CLCV Executive Director at the time, said, "Mark is a different kind of leader. He is dedicated, ethical, even-handed, and proactive, with a big picture perspective. Golden Gate Audubon is lucky to have him as its ED. He will see the organization through tough times ahead."

Mark holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. In his spare time, he has volunteered on harbor seal monitoring teams for the Farallones Marine Sanctuary Association and studied bird and pinniped populations on Santa Barbara Island. He is also an avid sailor and former volunteer crew with the Nautilus Institute's Pegasus Program in Berkeley.

According to Diane Ross-Leech, Golden Gate Audubon Board President and Chair of the Executive Director Search Committee, "We received some 74 applications from across the country for our Executive Director position, and during several months of reviewing resumes and holding interviews, our search committee considered many outstanding candidates. We are very pleased and delighted that our first choice accepted the position. We're confident that Mark is the best, most qualified person for the job, and that he and Golden Gate Audubon will enjoy a long and fruitful relationship."

—Marjorie Blackwell



Welcome New GGA Board Members; Thanks to Leora Feeney

The Golden Gate Audubon Board of Directors is pleased to introduce two new members of the board; at the same time we regretfully accept the resignation of Leora Feeney from the board.

Carey Knecht joined the GGA Board in February 2009, with a particular interest in establishing a Golden Gate Audubon science advisory committee. Carey holds a bachelor's degree in biology from Yale University and a master's degree in city planning from U.C. Berkeley. She currently is Policy Director at Greenbelt Alliance in San Francisco, where she managed the Alliance's work on the Green Vision Group, a major effort to map open space protection needs in the Bay Area and create a strategy to protect the lands. (The report *Golden Lands: Golden Opportunity* is available at www.golden-lands.org.)

Linda Vallee joined the GGA board in December 2008, replacing long-time board member Leora Feeney as the board representative of Friends of the Alameda Wildlife Refuge Committee (FAWR). Linda has been an active member of FAWR for 10 years, participating in the committee's ongoing commitment to preserve and protect the Alameda Wildlife Refuge site for endangered California Least Terns and other wildlife. In addition to being an enthusiastic birder, Linda is a long-time volunteer at the Lindsay Wildlife Museum, Ohlone Wildlife Hospital, and Golden Gate Raptor Observatory (GGRO). She has also participated in an Alameda County Burrowing Owl survey, Golden Eagle nest monitoring, Peregrine Falcon nest monitoring, and GGRO telemetry programs. With a bachelors' degree in biology from Radcliffe College, Harvard University, and a master's in basic medical research from New York University, Linda currently is a Systems Engineer Specialist in the IT Department for Fireman's Fund Insurance Company.

Leora Feeney, a biologist who served on the GGA board for more than 16 years, was a founding member of FAWR. For the past 16 years, she has been the driving

WELCOME continued on page 12



CONSERVATION CORNER

Eddie Bartley



California Red-legged Frog

SHARP PARK PRESERVE FOR SNAKES AND FROGS

The 146-acre, 18-hole Sharp Park Golf Course in Pacifica, designed by Alistair Mackenzie and owned by San Francisco, is being considered as a restoration site for the bright blue bellied San Francisco Garter Snake and the California Red-legged Frog of Mark Twain fame. Current golf course maintenance practices threaten these already endangered species. Last year Golden Gate Audubon sent a letter to the Board of Supervisors supporting alternatives for the park that would increase and stabilize the endangered species there. In return, GGA members were asked to leave the golf course during the 2008 Christmas Bird Count.

In March 2009, Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi proposed legislation directing the Recreation & Parks Department to restore the area and give it to the National Park Service or manage it jointly with the Park Service. Alternatives considering whether to eliminate, redesign, or retain the golf course are now being discussed.

A report released in August 2008 by PROS Consulting LLC, found that the city is subsidizing its golf courses by \$1.5 million per year, and that this subsidy is expected to increase to \$3 million by 2012. Although Sharp Park operates at only 44.2% of capacity, the report recommended a redesign with private money for capital improvements over five years and long term

management by a contractor. Golden Gate Audubon recommends restoring the site for wildlife. Additional information can be found at www.restoresharpark.org. Please send a letter to your San Francisco Supervisor supporting restoring Sharp Park to support our local endangered species.

—Noreen Weeden

TELEPHONE FOR TERNS

In February, Mike Lynes, GGA's Conservation Director, Leora Feeney, and Arthur Feinstein of Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge attended the Friends of the Wildlife Refuges Association conference in Washington, D.C. on behalf of the proposed Alameda Wildlife Refuge. As reported in the March issue of *The Gull*, the Veterans Administration and the Navy are continuing with their plan to develop a hospital, office complex, and columbarium. We met with members from our local congressional delegation and both Senators Feinstein and Boxer, who have been supportive of the effort to create the Refuge in the past. Golden Gate Audubon will continue to work on the creation of the Refuge. Please write or call your Congressional representative and the two Senators to let them know you oppose the proposed V.A. complex and support creation of the Refuge for the terns and other area wildlife.

visitors, helicopter and airplane overflights, and near-shore boats. The study found significant declines in some breeding seabird populations. The Brandt's Cormorant breeding population, which is very sensitive to disturbance, decreased by 15% in 2008, the first decline in 8 years, and its reproductive success was the lowest on record for the Alcatraz colony. Pelagic Cormorants have decreased by nearly 100% since 1996, and only 1 breeding pair remained in 2008. The researchers also observed a slight increase in Western Gulls and Pigeon Guillemots. The researchers documented 39 human disturbances to the Brandt's Cormorants: most were due to kayaks, canoes, and other marine-based sources. To express your concerns about the breeding birds on Alcatraz Island, please contact the National Park Service at 415-561-4900 and urge it to follow PRBO's recommendations to protect and manage the critical seabird breeding area.

—Mike Lynes

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AND EVENTS

Saturday, May 16, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.: Martin Luther King Jr. Shoreline work day
Enter the park from Swan Way and follow the road to the end parking lot. We will meet near the wooden observation platform adjacent to Arrowhead Marsh.

Saturday, May 23, 9 a.m. – noon: Save the Quail habitat restoration work day at Harding Park

Meet at the parking lot at the corner of Sunset Blvd. and Lake Merced Blvd.

Saturday, June 20, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.: Return of the Terns at Crab Cove Visitor Center, Alameda

Please join us to celebrate the return of the endangered California Least Terns, nesting at the Alameda Wildlife Refuge after their 2,000-mile migration from Latin America. Reserve a one-hour viewing trip to the Alameda Wildlife Refuge with a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist: registration

CONSERVATION CORNER continued on page 4

required; please visit www.ebparks.org.

JOIN A MONITORING PROGRAM

Lights Out for Birds in downtown San Francisco

Golden Gate Audubon volunteers are conducting early-morning censuses in downtown San Francisco during spring migration (February 15 – May 15) to collect birds that may have collided with buildings during the night. The censuses will be part of our San Francisco Lights Out for Birds program, which encourages building owners, managers, and tenants to turn off lights in tall buildings at night to reduce bird collisions and conserve energy.

Friends of the Alameda Wildlife Refuge TERNWATCH

Volunteers

Monitor the California Least Tern nesting colony during the breeding season to detect predators, or conditions that put the birds at risk. Volunteers will be directly observing and recording an endangered species, a tremendous privilege. A required two-hour training class will be offered. If you are interested, please contact Leora Feeney from Friends of the Alameda Wildlife Refuge at leoraalameda@att.net.

JOIN A CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

Join the Conservation Committee on your side of the Bay to find out about our local projects. The East Bay Conservation Committee

meets on the first Tuesday of every month at 6:30 p.m. at a restaurant in downtown Berkeley. For more information contact Phil Price at pnpice@creekcats.com. The San Francisco Conservation Committee meets the first Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. at the Randall Museum.

For more information on any of these activities or events, or for directions to any of the sites, please contact Jennifer Robinson Maddox, GGA's Volunteer Coordinator, at jrobinson@goldengateaudubon.org.



Long-billed Curlew

Lee Karney

Falcons Dazzle City; Outreach Volunteers Needed

San Francisco's Financial District is abuzz and in love: nesting Peregrine Falcons have returned to the PG&E building. During February and March, observers saw the magnificent couple engaging in courtship flights and aerial food exchanges, hunting over downtown and the Bay, and mating on a skyscraper ledge. The female has laid at least four eggs in a rooftop nest box provided by U.C. Santa Cruz biologists, and the incubation is getting 24/7 high quality coverage at <http://www2.ucsc.edu/scp-brg/falconcamera.htm>.

The nesting of an endangered and dramatic bird of prey in an urban setting presents a remarkable opportunity for volunteers to educate, inspire, and motivate San Francisco residents and workers. A member of Golden Gate Audubon's Board of Directors, Mark Mushkat, reports that hundreds of pedestrians have stopped to look at the perched or flying birds. With a spotting scope set up near the northeast corner of Mission and Main streets, great views of one or both falcons are possible, creating a superb opportunity for volunteers to talk with people about the threats to the species, the nest box program in cooperation with PG&E, and Golden Gate Audubon. Volunteers are needed until mid-to-late June (the nesting and fledging season is short) to hand out brochures and literature with background on the biology of the species and information about joining Golden Gate Audubon.

Volunteers will receive "on-the-job" training and experience gratitude from the passersby who enjoy the rare opportunity to see a rare bird. What a great way to share your passion for birds with people of all ages and help Golden Gate Audubon's education efforts.

—Mark Mushkat



Courtesy of and © Glen Neville

"George" nested in San Francisco for several years but disappeared in 2007.

GGA Big Trip to Belize – Good Fun and Great Birds

With a big grin and dozens of natural history stories, Mark Pretti, of Mark Pretti Nature Tours, led two groups of GGA members through Belizian swamps and jungles in February. Each trip included sightings of over 200 species of birds, river cruises, and visits to two fascinating Mayan ruins. At our first stop, Bird's-Eye View Lodge, we enjoyed a huge Jabiru on a nest, marveled at the color of Vermilion Flycatchers, and spotted a pair of secretive Ruddy Crakes. At Lamanai, we toured the Lamanai ruins and museum, with its somewhat mysterious Mayan glyphs. There are hundreds of unexcavated Mayan ruins in Belize, so one can only imagine what is still to be learned about this civilization. A spectacular nighttime boat trip on the New River let us creep right up to sleeping kingfishers, warblers and a marvelous Sun Grebe, all roosting on fragile twigs and grasses that twitch an alarm at the approach of a predator. Pook's Hill, our third stop, was pure magic. We stayed in thatched-roofed cabins and wandered down forest trails to find jungle jewels like Long-billed Hermits, White-whiskered Puffbird, White-collared Manakin and Crimson-collared Tanager. The food was great, the owner was charming and the weather perfect. And then we finished with a visit to the Pine Ridge area and Hidden Valley Inn,



Gray-necked Wood-Rail

a beautiful, elegant place with orioles and hummingbirds coming to feeders outside the dining room, wonderful views of the endangered Orange-breasted Falcon, and a visit to the nearby Caracol ruins.

Golden Gate Audubon and Mark Pretti Nature Tours are running two trips to Brazil this summer. There is one spot available in the June 27-July 11 section. In December 2009 and January 2010, Mark will lead two trips to Oaxaca, Mexico. Contact Ruth Tobey (ruthtobey@gmail.com; 510-528-2093) for information.

—Ruth Tobey



Vermilion Flycatcher

Bob Lewis

Bob Lewis

Golden Gate Audubon Day at the Ranch

Sunday, May 17, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Mid-May is the peak of the season for the nesting Great Egrets and Great Blue Herons at Audubon Canyon Ranch. This year Golden Gate Audubon is having a special day at ACR to introduce this wonderful sanctuary to our members who are not familiar with it, and to give the rest of us a chance to get together and enjoy some great birding, hiking, and relaxation in one of the Bay Area's premiere native habitat preserves.

Audubon Canyon Ranch was founded by leaders of Golden Gate, Marin, Sequoia, and Madrone Audubon Societies. Now ACR has three major preserves and protects over 2,000 acres in Marin and Sonoma Counties. The Bolinas Lagoon Preserve is the cornerstone of this rich mosaic of preserves. The heronry our founders sought to protect remains active and open for

us to enjoy. In addition, the Bolinas Lagoon Preserve features three ponds that are a focal point for education of children and adults, and the canyons are laced with about five miles of trails. ACR Ranch Guides will be at the ponds and overlooks to help interpret the aquatic and bird life of the Ranch. GGAS will sponsor three hikes to the overlook.

Bring a picnic lunch, since food or beverages are not available. Dress in layers for cool coastal weather, and bring footwear appropriate for the trail. From San Francisco drive north on Hwy 101 to the Hwy 1/Stinson Beach Exit, follow Hwy 1 west 12 miles to Stinson Beach. The Ranch is 3.5 miles north. From the East Bay cross the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge and take Sir Francis Drake Blvd west 21 miles to Olema. Go south (left) on Hwy 1 for about 10 miles to Bolinas Lagoon. The Ranch is about a mile south of the north end of the lagoon. Admission to the Ranch is free, but donations are encouraged.



FIELD TRIPS

PAM BELCHAMBER, COORDINATOR

\$ Entrance fee
Biking trip

For questions about individual field trips, contact the leaders. If you cannot reach a leader, contact Pam Belchamber at 510.549.2839. Field trips are also listed on the Golden Gate Audubon website at www.goldengateaudubon.org.

Jewel Lake in Tilden

Berkeley

Friday, May 1, 8:30 – 10:30 a.m.

Phila Rogers, 510.848.9156,
philajane6@yahoo.com

On the first Friday of the month, the Jewel Lake walk will meet at the parking lot at the north end of Central Park Dr. for a one-mile, two-hour-plus stroll through this lush riparian area. Breeding birds are returning, and we should be treated to some wonderful bird song. Mud and rain should be gone by now.

Birding for Everyone

San Francisco Botanical Garden at Strybing Arboretum

Saturday, May 2, 10 a.m. – noon

Angie Geiger and Nancy DeStefanis, S.F. Nature Education, Darin Dawson, S.F. Botanical Garden Docent, 415.387.9160; www.sfnature.org

Meet for this monthly trip at the kiosk/bookstore at front gate of Botanical Garden, Ninth Avenue at Lincoln Way. Families welcome. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Co-sponsored by Botanical Garden, San Francisco Nature Education, and Golden Gate Audubon Society.

San Francisco Botanical Gardens

Golden Gate Park, San Francisco

Sunday May 3, 8 – 10:30 a.m.

Alan Ridley, allanrid@pacbell.net; Helen McKenna, 415.566.3241; Ginny Marshall, ginnybirder@sbcglobal.net, Dominik Mosur, polskatata@yahoo.com

Meet at 8 a.m. at the front gate of the Botanical Garden at Ninth Avenue at Lincoln Way. This delightful section of Golden Gate Park has several micro-habitats that attract an array of resident, migrant, and vagrant birds. This regular monthly trip is oriented toward beginning birders.

Wildcat Canyon Regional Park

Alameda County

Sunday, May 3, 8 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Malcolm Sproul, 925.376.8945

Meet by Arlington Clubhouse on Arlington Ave. in El Cerrito, next to tennis courts between Brewster Drive and Thors Day Road. We'll drive to trailhead on Rifle Range Road, then walk a hilly transect of the canyon to bird brushlands, oak woodlands, riparian areas, and grasslands. Five-mile hike led by Malcolm for the 29th year. Bring lunch and liquids.

2009 Annual Spring Bird Survey

Presidio of San Francisco

Saturday, May 9, 8 a.m. – noon

Andrew Kleinhesselink, akleinheselink@presidiotrust.gov, 415.850.4332

Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day collecting data on the Presidio's breeding bird species. Since 2005, one morning each spring, volunteer birdwatchers have walked one of eight designated routes through the Presidio counting species of concern such as Wrentits, Wilson's Warblers, and Olive-sided Flycatchers. These estimates will help document trends in bird populations in the Presidio and the effect that restoration and re-forestation is having on breeding habitat in the Park. The data is strengthened by continued monitoring—and we need your help. Novice birders will be paired with experienced birders, so this is a great way to learn to identify common San Francisco birds both by sight and spring songs. After walking their routes, teams will reconvene to share their highlight birds. Meet at the Crissy Field Center at the corner of Mason and Halleck, across the street from the Crissy Field marsh.

Sibley Volcanic Regional Preserve

Saturday May 9, 8 a.m. – noon

Rusty Scalf, rscalf@sonic.net

Join Rusty for a morning of bird watching at our own East Bay volcano. The address of this park is 6800 Skyline Blvd. Drive south on Grizzly Peak Blvd until it ends; turn left onto Skyline—the park entrance is located a short distance (about a quarter mile) on Skyline on the left. Meet at parking lot.

Garin Regional Park

Hayward

Sunday, May 10, 8 – 11:30 a.m.

Anne Hoff, anne2210b@sbcglobal.net, 925.229.4908

Birds we might see are breeders in spring plumage, including goldfinches and finches, orioles, Western Bluebirds, swallows, and sparrows. It is likely we will see raptors soaring over the hillside. Take I-880 to Hayward, exit Tennyson Road (exit 26). Drive east on Tennyson to the junction with Mission Boulevard. Turn Right onto Mission Boulevard and drive south about 1 mile. Turn left onto Garin Ave. and continue up the hill. The road ends at the park entrance kiosk. Meet in the parking lot nearest the creek to the left after the entrance kiosk.

Grizzly Island

Solano County

Saturday, May 16, 3:30 p.m. – late evening

Rusty Scalf, rscalf@sonic.net

In early spring, Rush Ranch is gorgeous. Green grass and wildflowers dot the hillsides and meadows where nature and bird watching will offer many surprises. We will hike the trails of Rush Ranch and visit nearby wetlands until dinner time, when we retire to Suisun City for a group dinner at one of the city's fine restaurants. Sunset is at 8:29 p.m. We'll return to Grizzly Island in pursuit of night sounds, hopefully rails and bitterns. Entomologists, please bring your mosquito keys!

Directions: From Interstate 80 in Solano County, exit CA 12 east. Drive 4 miles and turn right on Grizzly Island Road. Drive 2.5 miles south on Grizzly Island Road, then turn into the preserve. Meet at 3:30 p.m. in the parking lot at Rush Ranch, a small dirt lot. Portable toilets, water, and maps at visitor center.



Verne Nelson

Wilson's Warbler

Corona Heights

San Francisco

Friday, May 22, 8 – 10 a.m.

Charles Hibbard; Dominik Mosur; Brian Fitch; Margaret Goodale, mgoodale@randallmuseum.org, 415.554.9600 x16

Meet in front of Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way, at end of Museum Way off Roosevelt for this popular birding experience. We will enjoy views of the city and bay as we circle Corona Heights, checking east canyon woodland and north forest for residents and migrants. We will monitor hilltop scrub and south cliff as well.

Lake Merritt and Lakeside Park

Oakland

Wednesday, May 27, at 9:30 a.m. – noon

Hilary Powers, 510.834.1066, hilary@powersedit.com; Ruth Tobey, 510.528.2093, ruthtobey@earthlink.net

Join us at large spherical cage near Nature Center at Perkins and Bellevue. We will bird around there, then go up the garden path toward Children's Fairyland or walk down the lake toward Embarcadero, after which we will cover what we missed. Some winter migrants and the cormorant and egret rookery should still be with us. The Park may offer warblers, woodpeckers, and a few surprises. Take 12, N, or NL bus to Grand and Perkins. Walk into park on Perkins. Best parking at boathouse lot near spherical cage. Entry (via Bellevue near Children's Fairyland) is

free on weekdays.

Point Reyes National Seashore

Marin County

Sunday, May 31, 8:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Emilie Strauss, desertpeach@earthlink.net; 510.540.8749

Meet at Five Brooks Pond. We will bird the pond for approximately an hour in search of nesting landbirds and Wood Ducks. Then we will hike up a nearby trail (probably Greenpicker Trail) in search of Pileated Woodpeckers and other forest species. The hike through shady large Douglas firs involves a climb of approximately 600-800 feet and is approximately 2 miles each way. Bring a lunch and liquids if you plan to stay for lunch.

Lassen Volcanic National Park

Friday to Sunday, June 26 – 28

Dan and Joan Murphy, 415.564.0074, murphsf@comcast.net, email preferred

The 2009 GGA trip to Lassen Volcanic National Park will take place on the extended weekend of June 26-28. We will have a preview event on the evening of June 25. Camping facilities are available at the Manzanita Lake Campground. About half the sites are on a first-come, first served basis. For reserved sites check online at www.recreation.gov or call 877.444.6777. Lodging is available about 15 miles north of the park at Hat Creek Resort, Old Station 530.335.7121. Other information can be obtained from the park headquarters, Mineral, CA 96063. Details of this trip will appear on line and in the Summer *Gull*.

Mono Lake and Eastern Sierra

July 10, 11, 12, Friday – Sunday

Emilie Strauss, desertpeach@earthlink.net; Rusty Scalf, rscalf@sonic.net

Meet at Mono Lake County Park at 8 a.m., Friday, July 10. We will visit the west and south shores of Mono Lake, Lundy and Lee Vining Canyons, and Saddlebag Lake. The third day we will be at over 10,000 feet and will spend the day hiking with a significant climb. Please be in good physical condition. Limit 15 people. More information will be found in the Summer *Gull*.

Please Renew Your Annual GGA Membership Today

Effective June 1, 2009, Golden Gate Audubon is increasing its annual dues for Supporting Members. New and renewing Supporting Membership dues are increasing in response to the expanding number of educational programs, classes, field trips, lectures, and volunteer restoration events we offer each year.

If you are currently receiving *The Gull* as a member of National Audubon and you are not a supporting member of Golden Gate Audubon, we urge you to join the chapter directly. Your membership dues are critical to supporting the conservation and education work we do here in the Bay Area.

Membership levels:

Student: \$25.00

Brown Pelican (Individual): \$35.00

California Quail (Family): \$50.00

Clapper Rail: \$100-199

Least Tern: \$200-499

Peregrine Falcon: \$500-999

Golden Eagle: \$1,000 and above

Benefits of being a Supporting Member include:

- One-year subscription to *The Gull* (9 issues)
- 10% discount on purchases at our nature store in Berkeley
- Access to field trips and monthly programs
- Priority registration for special classes
- Discounts on eligible classes and events
- Volunteer opportunities
- Knowledge that 100% of your dues goes toward local conservation and environmental education programs.

How to join or renew:

To join or renew as a Supporting Member at our current rates, please contact us by May 31, 2009 by mail, phone, or through our website. Your membership dues will help sustain our education programs and ensure that our conservation work continues around the Bay. Thank you for your support.



SPEAKER SERIES

KAREN FREDRIKSEN, COORDINATOR

Talks in the Speaker Series begin at 7:30 p.m.

The Owl and the Woodpecker—Encounters With North America's Most Iconic Birds

Paul Bannick

Berkeley: Thursday, May 21

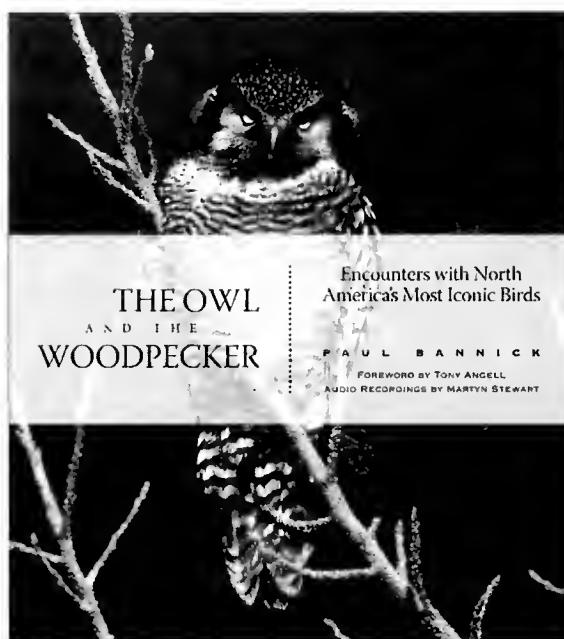
Spanning the continent from the arctic tundra to the pine forests of the southeast, in *The Owl and the Woodpecker*, Seattle-based nature photographer Paul Bannick captures all 41 North American species of two iconic birds that hold a prized spot in the hearts of birdwatchers. With a foreword by Tony Angell, and an audio recording by Martyn Stewart, *The Owl and the Woodpecker* (October 2008) features stunning photography, captured through thousands of hours in the field observing owl and woodpecker behavioral patterns in their natural habitats.

In his book and talk, Bannick explores the diversity of these two families of birds, and the ways in which they define and enrich the ecosystems they inhabit. Woodpeckers change and improve their landscape, carving cavities that other animals then nest in, and drilling wells of sap that others feed upon. Owls, among the creatures that benefit from the woodpeckers' activities, are a high-order predator, whose very presence attests to the health of an ecosystem.

From familiar birds like the Northern Flicker and Great-Horned Owl to rarer species like the Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl, Red-Cockaded Woodpecker and Northern Spotted Owl, Bannick provides a close look at each bird within the habitat it

helps define. Complete with a field guide to North American owl and woodpecker species, Bannick's photo journey is both comprehensive and visually rewarding.

Paul Bannick is an award-winning photographer, specializing in natural history imagery. An experienced naturalist and outdoor educator, Paul creates many of his images while kayaking, hiking, or snowshoeing in the Pacific Northwest. His work has appeared in numerous books and magazines, including *The Seattle Times' Pacific Northwest Magazine*, *Sunset*, and *PhotoMedia*, as well as on interpretive signs in both state and national parks throughout the West. Paul is the Director of Development for Conservation Northwest, and lives in Seattle, Washington. Books will be sold at the event.



Berkeley: Northbrae Community Church, 941 The Alameda (between Solano and Marin).
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CLASSES

Golden Gate Audubon is sponsoring the following 2 classes through the Albany Adult School, 601 San Gabriel Avenue, Albany. Register online at <http://albany.k12.ca.us/adult/> or call 510.559.6580 for more information.

Beginning Birding

Anne Hoff,
anne2210birds@global.net

Five Tuesday evenings, May 5 – June 2, 7 – 8:30 p.m.

Five Saturday field trips, May 9 – June 6

This introduction to birding covers identification, habitats, and use of equipment. Learn to recognize the more common birds of the Bay Area and where to find them.



Wrentit

Tom Grey

Butterflies in the City and the Sticks

Sal Levinson, sal.levinson@gmail.com
www.butterflygardener.com)

Four Tuesday evenings, May 5 – 26, 7 – 8 p.m.

Four Saturday field trips, May 9 – 30

Exclusive video reveals butterfly life cycle details. Learn identification, butterfly gardening, caterpillar rearing, and more. On field trips, look for field marks, behavior, and favored plants.

Citizen Science Techniques and Opportunities

Mike Lynes, mlynes@goldengateaudubon.org, 510.559.6581

Three Wednesday nights, GGA offices: May 13, 20, and 27, 7 – 9 p.m.

One Saturday field trip/class, May 23

This class will introduce students to several "citizen science" programs and techniques used throughout the United States, including monitoring methods for birds, reptiles, mammals, and plants. The class will focus on bird census methods, including the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology's Nest Watch Program, the Audubon Christmas Bird Count, and the Breeding Bird Survey, and specific methods such as point counts, area searches, and mist-netting. Students will also be trained to submit their data to regional and national databases, where the information will be part of analyses of long-term trends in bird populations and may be used to develop conservation measures. We will also discuss other citizen science programs and techniques for plants, mammals, and reptiles. A field day will include practical instruction in the techniques discussed (and hopefully some good birding!).

Cost: \$40; limited to 20 students

Birds of the Sierra - I

Bob Lewis (bob@wingbeats.org) and
Rusty Schafer (rusty@sierra.org)

Thursday, June 11, 3 p.m. through Sunday, June 14 at noon.
Field trips and lecture in the Sierra.

The Sierra in late spring is a wonderful place for birds, with meadows alive with Wilson's Snipe, Yellow-headed Black-birds and Wilson's Phalaropes; the mountains buzzing with nesting woodpeckers (White-headed, Black-backed, Hairy, and Williamson's, and Red-breasted Sapsuckers); Mountain Chickadees; Cassin's Finches; warblers; and flycatchers (Dusky, Hammonds, Gray, and Olive-sided; Western Wood-Pewee) abound, and the calls of bittern, snipe, and Sandhill Cranes carry through the night.

Fee: \$89 for GGA members, \$99 for non-members; includes one unforgettable dinner at San Francisco State's campus in Bassettts on the 13th. (limit 35 students)

Meeting Place: Yuba Pass parking lot on highway 49 between Sierraville and Bassettts at 3 p.m. on June 11.

Lodging: First come, first served for rooms at the rustic Sierra Valley Lodge, where GGA has reserved the lodge for the classes. Registration through GGA.

Birds of the Sierra - II

Bob Lewis (bob@wingbeats.org) and
Eddie Bartley (eddie@naturetrip.com)

Thursday, June 18, 3 p.m. through Sunday, June 21 at noon.
Field trips and lecture in the Sierra.

The Sierra in late spring is a wonderful place for birds, with meadows alive with Wilson's Snipe, Yellow-headed Black-birds and Wilson's Phalaropes; the mountains buzzing with nesting woodpeckers (White-headed, Black-backed, Hairy, and Williamson's, and Red-breasted Sapsuckers); Mountain Chickadees; Cassin's Finches; warblers; and flycatchers (Dusky, Hammonds, Gray, and Olive-sided; Western Wood-Pewee) abound, and the calls of bittern, snipe, and Sandhill Cranes carry through the night.

Fee: \$75 for GGA members, \$85 for non-members; does not include any meals. We will arrange group meals at Sierra Valley Lodge and in Sierraville, still to be finalized.

Meeting Place: Yuba Pass parking lot on highway 49 between Sierraville and Bassettts.

Lodging: First come, first served for rooms at the rustic Sierra Valley Lodge, where GGA has reserved the lodge for the classes. Registration through GGA. (limit 35 students)

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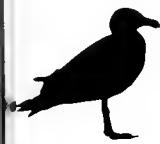
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OBSERVATIONS

BRUCE MAST

MAR 1 – 28, 2009

March was a celebration of the familiar seasonal cycles that give reassurance and hope. The winter storms dissipated, the hills blushed green, and the local migrants began returning for another breeding season. Predictably, vagrants were at a seasonal ebb, consisting mostly of winter hold-outs.

LOONS TO DUCKS

In MRN, the Tomales Bay Yellow-billed Loon (*Gavia adamsii*) remained a 3rd month at Miller Park Boat Launch through the 27th (mob). For a short time, 2 birds were present, a 1st year bird and an adult. Solo Black-footed Albatrosses wheeled past Pigeon Pt., SM, on Mar. 7 and 23 (RT). Also at Pigeon Pt., the Northern Fulmar count hit 31 on the 27th, a Pink-footed Shearwater and Ashy Storm-Petrel were noted on the 7th, and the season's first Sooty Shearwater was recorded on the 11th (RT).

At least 2 Harlequin Ducks continued through the 15th on Tomales Bay near Marshall (LR). The remaining Harlequin reports were of the regulars at Heron's Head, SF, and Coyote Pt., SM. Black Scotters were spied on the 7th off Pigeon Pt., SM (RT) and on the 26th north of Hayward's Landing at Hayward RS, ALA (BRi). The Redwood Shores Long-tailed Duck stuck to its base in the slough by Lagoon Drive through the 6th (AE; mob).

RAPTORS TO ALCIDS

A few Swainson's Hawks pushed north through the region, cruising over Ed Levin CP, SCL, on the 7th (SR) and over Soscol Ferry Rd. and Highway 29/12, NAP, on the 21st (AW). Overwintering Rough-legged Hawks remained in SON through the 19th along Highway 12 between Santa Rosa and Sonoma (GM) and near the Sonoma Marina on the Petaluma River (RS). At least 1 Black Rail called persistently during the early morning hours of Mar. 10-15 from the freshwater marsh at the entrance to Coyote Hills RP, ALA (KS, BP; mob). A single Pomarine Jaeger sailed past Pigeon Pt., SM, on the 7th, wondering where all



Brown Thrasher

WOOD WARBLERS TO FINCHES

Procrastinating birders were still able to see SF's Worm-eating Warbler (*Hemitrochus vermivorus*) in Ferry Park through the 14th (mob). The more remarkable sighting was a Blackpoll Warbler, reported Mar. 27 at Charcoal Rd, SCL (BRe, FV). While this species is a frequent fall vagrant, it is unprecedented in spring. JMo noted that "[t]his species leaves S. America in early to mid-April and arrives in Florida in mid-April (exceptionally late March). Prior California spring records have been in May and June with stragglers in July." The only other noteworthy warbler report was of a Palm Warbler at Mendoza (B) Ranch on outer PRNS, MRN, on the 18th (RS).

A Clay-colored Sparrow lingered through the 5th along the Guadalupe River Trail north of Blossom Hill Rd., SCL (JP). A Swamp Sparrow was located on the 12th at the Nob Hill Pond in Redwood Shores, SM (RT). The Livermore, ALA, Harris's Sparrow remained a backyard fixture through the 27nd (DR; mob).

The GGP Rose-breasted Grosbeak remained at the Strybing Arboretum through the 16th (mob). Another Rose-breasted Grosbeak began visiting a Crocker Ave., SF, feeder on the 5th, staying through the 20th (LW). On the 8th, a massive flock of blackbirds around a cattle operation near Buckley, SOL, included a female that showed good field marks for a Rusty Blackbird (DB). An Orchard Oriole loitered through the 20th at the Potrero Hill Play-ground, SF (DMo).

DOVES TO THRASHERS

Common Poorwills began to stir this month, beginning with the Mar. 7 sighting on the trail in Tennessee Valley, MRN (DA). A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was located on the 17th at Filoli Estate (Woodside), SM (SJ, DP). The Coyote Hills (ALA) Brown Thrasher continued staging at the Quarry Staging Area through the 15th (mob).

See Birding Resources at www.goldengateaudubon.org, for complete sightings data

Semicolons separate original observer(s) from subsequent observer(s). Abbreviation "mob" = many observers; "oob" = other observers. Information is compiled from BirdBox transcripts and regional listservs; the author apologizes for any errors or omissions. Special thanks to Rod Thornton for helping compile Observations data

Abbreviations for Observers: AE, Al Eisner; AH, Alan Hopkins; AJ, Al Jaramillo; AW, Alan Wight, BB, Bill Bousman, BF, Brian Fitch; BP, Bob Power; BRe, Bob Reiling, BRi, Bob Richmond, DA, David Assmann; DaW, Dave Weber, DB, Dave Bell; DC, George Chrisman; DL, Garrett Lau; DMo, Dominik Mosur; DMu, Dan Murphy; DoW, Doug Weidemann; DP, Donna Peterson; DR, Dennis Rashe'; FH, Floyd Hayes; FV, Frank Vanslager; GM, Gerald Mugele, HC, Hugh Cotter; JC, John Cant, JH, Joel Horstein, JMa, Joy Mander; JMo, Joe Morlan; JP, Janna Pauser; JR, Jennifer Ryenga, KO, Kris Olson, KS, Ken Schneider; LH, Lisa Hug; LP, Linda Petrulias; LR, Lou Regenmorter, LW, Lee Way; MA, Mike Aiardi; ME, Mark Eaton, PD, Pete Dunten; PM, Peter Metropoulos; RGa, Robert Garriock; RGu, Roberta Guise; RR, Ruth Rudesill; RS, Rich Stallcup; RT, Ron Thorn; SJ, Sue James; SP, Shantanu Phukan; SR, Steve Rottenborn

Abbreviations for Counties and Others: ALA, Alameda; CC, Contra Costa; CP, County Park; Cr., Creek; Cyn., Canyon; GGP, Golden Gate Park; L., Lake; MRN, Marin; Mt., Mount; N., North; NAP, Napa; NWR, National Wildlife Refuge; OSP, Open Space Preserve; PRNS, Pt Reyes National Seashore; Pt., Point; Rd., Road; Res., Reservoir; RP, Regional Park; RS, Regional Shoreline; S., South; SB, State Beach; SCL, Santa Clara; SF, San Francisco; SM, San Mateo; SOL, Solano; SON, Sonoma; SP, State Park; SR, State Reserve

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ECO-OAKLAND INTERNS from cover

the size the state of Texas. Marine animals become entangled in the debris, ingest it, or are suffocated by it. In their presentation, the interns featured the Laysan Albatross, which often confuses plastic for fish and squid and has been gravely affected by marine debris due to the species' habitat proximity to the North Pacific Gyre.

Preparing for many weeks prior to the assembly, the interns fortified their public speaking skills as they rehearsed their PowerPoint and developed an interactive game in which audience members guessed the rates of decomposition for common trash items. The interns delivered an engaging performance and received congratulatory remarks throughout the rest of the assembly.

Says intern Steven Saefong, "I was very proud because I was able to go up there and share my knowledge about the way our ecosystems are getting tainted by debris." His sister Koy echoed his remarks, "We were the first to present and I felt proud that we really taught the audience something new."

After their presentation, the interns had a chance to relax and explore the peaceful setting of Asilomar. "My favorite expe-

rience was to get up in the morning and smell nature all around me," says Chan Saelee. The students were also fortunate to be treated to a workshop with Jack Laws, the celebrated author and nature illustrator. Eco-Oakland intern Oscar Murillo described the opportunity as the highlight of his trip. "Art is one of my hobbies, so connecting art and my environment with Audubon at the same time was really fun for me!"

Amidst all of the focus on grave environmental issues, it was refreshing to see Audubon youth take the stage and empower their audience with the work they are doing in their own communities. Glenn Olson, Executive Director of Audubon California, shared his excitement over the Eco-Oakland Program's interns: "It was inspiring and compelling to have the high school interns sponsored by Golden Gate Audubon sharing their work, their results, and their passion. I came away feeling we are all in this together, and I like being there with young folks who are keeping hope alive for the future by their dedication and commitment to the environment."

—Anthony DeCicco

WELCOME from page 2

force in Golden Gate Audubon's efforts to persuade the U.S. Navy to transfer 579 acres of the former Alameda Naval Air Station (plus 375 acres of critical foraging area in adjacent San Francisco Bay waters) to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for official designation as a wildlife refuge. To date, the Navy has refused to make the transfer, primarily due to an impasse over future liability for toxins cleanup. Currently, the Navy is proposing to transfer the site to the Veterans Administration for construction of a hospital and columbarium complex. Although Leora is no longer on the GGA Board, she is continuing to serve as Chair of the FAWR Committee and to pursue her lasting commitment and dedication to creating the Alameda Wildlife Refuge.

—Marjorie Blackwell